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RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL-BASED LEADERSHIP

Volume 15 No. 1, Winter 2007

Students At Risk



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The CAP Journal

The Canadian Resource for School-Based Leadership
Volume 15. No. 1, Winter 2007

Contents

- 2 *President's Message - Ted Whiteland*
- 6 *Success: One Student At A Time - Charlie Coleman*
- 10 *At Risk Students in Transition - Jim Ansell*
- 12 *I Think I Finally Get It - Kevin Battaglia*
- 16 *Storefront - Adrienne Hiebert & Kim Tobin*
- 21 *Navigating Information: Finding the Right College or University - Sean Junor*
- 22 *Attention Deficit Disorder and Girls - Cindy Matthews*
- 26 *"At Risk" Administrators - Gerald W. Fussell*
- 31 *Preparing Students for our Shrinking Globe - Nicole Asquith*
- 36 *Managing the Alternate Classroom - Gretchen Vogelsang*
- 40 *Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation share research that studies barriers to post secondary education for Canadian Students*

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President's Message

As I write this, it is closing in on the holiday season and there is electrically charged energy in our schools. As principals and vice-principals, we are challenged to assist with the maintenance of a calm and orderly school setting while at the same time revert back to our early years as we send out our own best wishes to family and friends and enjoy thoroughly the unabashed enthusiasm of our youngest students as they ready for the “big day”. Whether it be the special invitation to the annual concert, the enjoyment of the delicious treats or the time to “dust off” and once again wear that very special Christmas garb, the spirit of the holiday season permeates our schools.

Don't we cherish the looks of awe in the student's eyes as that special tie, from a student whose name has long passed out of our memory bank, lights up and plays a favourite Christmas carol, almost by magic.

Yes, that is the word – magic – the magic of this most special of times when we all rejoice in the special meaning of the holiday season. May your thoughts be like that of the most innocent of each

child who believes that tomorrow will always be better and who relishes in the magic.

Amidst the season of innocence, we are always reminded just how vulnerable our students are and we reflect upon the significant expectation and challenge that parents have that the school is going to be a safe haven for their child.

Principals and vice-principals as education leaders are up to the challenge of providing that safe environment where all students are able to learn and to grow.

In response to the challenge to ensure our students remain safe and able to succeed, this edition of the *CAP Journal* presents several articles based upon the theme of *Students at Risk*:

Charlie Coleman's article *Success: One Student at a Time* features both some tried and true and some innovative strategies at Khowhemun Elementary School in B.C. Using the approach of Heart and Mind, the reader will enjoy Charlie's journey.

At Risk – Students in Transition captures what did not work for at risk

pupils in the first instance but what can happen if the some differentiated activities can take place...some of which can be observed in dramatic fashion.

Kevin Battaglia, Principal of Toronto's Rockcliff Middle School, shares his personal journey into how to effectively deal with at risk students in his article *I Think I Finally Get It*.

Adrienne Hiebert and Kim Tobin write about an alternative education structure entitled *Storefront* which has been meeting the needs of students, who have been struggling socially or academically.

Cindy Mathew's article *Attention Deficit Disorder: What YOU Should Know!* captures in a concise way the many attributes of female students who exhibit ADD characteristics and offers concrete examples of mitigating approaches.

“At risk” Administrators by **Gerald W. Fussell** provides some stark reminders of the children and youth who sometimes attend our schools. It is a must read to remind us of the very important role we play in a student's life.

Gretchen Vogelsang's article *Managing the Alternate Classroom* offers a glimpse into the author's belief system of what can be accomplished when one embraces the important role of educator founded on a conviction that values positive relationships.

Partners Who Assist Our Understanding of At Risk Pupils

CAP is fortunate to have many partners whose work is of significant assistance in our understanding of At Risk Students. I would like to outline two specific partners whose resources are of great value to school leaders: the Canadian Initiative for the Prevention of Bullying (CIPB) and the Media Awareness Network.

The Canadian Initiative for the Prevention of Bullying (CIPB)

www.cipb.ca is a coalition of Canadians concerned about bullying. The primary goal of the CIPB is to translate and exchange knowledge about bullying to enhance awareness, to provide assessment and intervention tools, and to promote policy related to the problems of bullying. Through this comprehensive and authoritative website, the CIPB disseminates knowledge about problems of bullying in a manner that is responsive to, and reflective of, the broadest diversity of community concerns in Canada. The website is designed for multiple audiences - children and youth, parents, educators, health professionals, media, public and private

organizations, and members of communities throughout Canada.

When one visits the website, there unfolds several resource materials that will assist in the understanding of the intricacies of the bullying phenomenon.

Another distinctive aspect of the CIPB is PREVNet which is a network of associations who believe in the collective approach to challenging bullying practices. PREVNet is the acronym for *Promoting Relationships and Ending Violence Network*. CAP is one of the NGO organizations who support PREVNet and their ultimate goal to eliminate violence.

I would suggest that the CIPB website www.cipb.ca along with the new PREVNet website, which will be available early in 2007, are two sites which should be read and bookmarked for ongoing reference.

Media Awareness Network

The Media Awareness Network (MNet) is another of the important partners whose focus is on Students at Risk.

MNet is a Canadian non-profit organization that has been pioneering the development of media literacy programs since its incorporation in 1996. Working out of offices in Ottawa and Montreal, members of MNet promote media and Internet education by producing online programs and resources, working in partnership with Canadian and international organizations, and speaking to audiences across Canada and around the world.

MNet's work is based on the belief that to be functionally literate in the world today – to be able to "read" the messages that inform, entertain and sell to us daily – young people need critical thinking skills. MNet focuses its efforts on equipping adults with information and tools to help young people to understand how the media work, how the media may affect their lifestyle choices and the extent to which they, as consumers and citizens, are being well informed. MNet also provides reference materials for use by adults and youth alike in examining media issues from a variety of perspectives.

MNet's website www.media-awareness.ca is a valuable source of up to date references to curricula and other supporting materials and is one that I would recommend be read by all school leaders.

2007 CAP National Conference: Connecting Leaders

This is a reminder to register for our annual conference which is being held this year at the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver in beautiful Vancouver, British Columbia from April 11 to 13, 2007.

This annual conference of the Canadian Association of Principals features speakers such as Stephen Lewis, Steve Donahue, Linda Kaser, Judy Halbert, Tom Hierck, Kim Schonert-Reichl, Steve Dotto, Faye Brownlie and more. Program details, pre-conference information and links to online conference and hotel registration are available by

going to the website of the BCPVPA at www.bcpvpa.bc.ca and linking onto the conference registration information.

I hope that you enjoy this winter edition of the CAP Journal and that you will take the time to follow up on the articles and websites cited throughout your professional journal. Your feedback and accolades on the fall edition were greatly appreciated and we hope that this edition will find as important a place in your professional library.

With best wishes for all the best in 2007.



Ted Whiteland, CAP President 2006-07

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Dear Editor,

I would like to thank CAP for an amazing edition of the CAP Journal Fall 2006 on Early Childhood Development. This edition has been instrumental in providing understanding for many of the people involved in decision making around early childhood services. The articles are carefully selected to provide a comprehensive overview of the issues that face us in the development of sound educational programming. Thank you for tackling this subject and providing an excellent resource. Everyone who works in Early Childhood Development should have a copy on their desks.

Mary McGregor
Associate Superintendent
Sturgeon School Division, AB

Mary McGregor,

Thank you for your comments. The Canadian Association of Principals is extremely proud of the fall issue of the CAP Journal which focused on early childhood development and is pleased that you will be using this issue as you develop your educational programming.

*Sincerely,
Marie Schutt, Executive Assistant*

Dear Editor,

I wish to express my appreciation of the fall issue of CAP focusing on Early Childhood Development. From the president's message onward, I was impressed with the quality of the material presented. The inclusion of a short biography of each author was most helpful. All are experts and encourage the reader to explore further the possibility of greater integration among the professionals who work with the youngest children.

As a member of the Steering Committee for the Best Start Demonstration Community of Chatham-Kent and Sarnia-Lambton, I found the substance invaluable. We have just completed the construction of over 30 Wrap programs and are in the process of completing the hubs with quality child care and quality learning for children from 0-6 years.

Some of the best practices that we have undertaken thus far are:

- a Summer Institute for the JK/SK/ECE staff
- a retreat for the Steering Committee with Susan Colley as the facilitator
- joint transportation from home to school to enable the JK/SK/ECE children to attend school 5 days per week
- the expansion of over 1300 child care spaces in both municipalities
- the introduction of the ELP with a specific program and more affordable child care
- a review of Data collection process that is completed by the various agencies and recommendations to assist with stream lining family information

In addition, when the topic is appropriate, we are inviting the JK/SK/ECE staff to attend professional development together throughout the school year. In some schools, they have worked together on improving their rooms through certified training in the Harms and Clifford Environmental Scale.

I will be sharing and reviewing this edition with the Child Care Committee of the SCCDSB. Furthermore, I am sure that the Steering Committee will find this volume very useful as we begin the next steps in our continuum – from construction to integration.

Thank you again for assembling so many experts associated with early childhood development in one edition. This volume will become a significant reference for many readers.

Dorothy Vermeulen
Child Care Consultant SCCDSB, ON

Dorothy Vermeulen,

Thank you for your letter regarding the fall issue of the CAP Journal, Volume 14 No. 3. The Canadian Association of Principals is pleased that you will be sharing this information with your colleagues and that this issue has been recognized as an 'invaluable' resource.

*Sincerely,
Marie Schutt, Executive Assistant*



About the Author:

In 2002, Charlie Coleman accepted a position that would be tough for any principal—the leadership role at Khowhemun Elementary School in Duncan, British Columbia. This school had recently endured difficult times that negatively impacted student learning. However, in just four years after Charlie became principal, the percent of all Khowhemun students who met or exceeded expected scores in math and reading (based on the British Columbia Performance Standards) increased significantly. Charlie’s accomplishments earned him the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) 2005 Outstanding Young Educator Award (Education World, 2006).

A firm believer in servant leadership, Charlie uses his knowledge and energy to help other educators achieve great results. His dynamic presentations engage participants in an inspiring exploration of best practices for school improvement that focus on key PLC concepts. In addition, his experience working with urban and First Nation (aboriginal) students translates into practical strategies for helping eliminate achievement gaps in diverse school communities.

Today, Charlie continues his work as principal of Khowhemun and is involved with the Ministry of Education School Improvement Project. He has also worked in a variety of middle and high school settings. He has published several articles in the United States and Canada and has served on numerous educational committees and teams.

Charlie has 10 years experience as a certified staff developer and has been an educator for 18 years. He earned his master’s degree in education administration and leadership studies and his bachelor’s degree in secondary curriculum from the University of Victoria.

In addition to recognition from ASCD in 2005, Charlie also received Canada’s Outstanding Principal Award from The Learning Partnership, and Khowhemun was named a “Top 40 School in Canada” by Today’s Parent magazine.

Success

One Student At A Time

Charlie Coleman
Principal, Khowhemun Elementary School

At Khowhemun Elementary, we have made a difference for all kids, especially our “at risk” students. Khowhemun Elementary is a school with its own set of challenges. Over the past decade, the school has just gone through a major demographic shift. What was once a small primary school in a professional neighbourhood, has grown into a large K to 6 school with a diverse population. The Khowhemun population is now roughly one-third “inner-city”, one-third “First Nations” (Native Canadian) and one-third “middle-class”. Five years ago, student results were stagnant, with about 33% of students consistently working below expectations so we embarked on a collaborative journey to improve those results one student at a time.

Heart and Mind

You have to touch the heart before you can reach the mind. We started an improvement process based on that belief.

We began that process by creating a safe, caring, positive learning environment... for kids and adults. Students’ concerns were listened to and common expectations were developed, taught and reinforced. Staff concerns were shared, which was followed up with action around changes to some of our school structures and instructional practices. Parent and community concerns were heard, and we made adjustments to our rules and routines to make families feel welcome and more involved. The Code of Conduct was simplified and made clear to all. It can be summed up simply as “Be Respectful, Responsible and Safe”. This simplified Code of Conduct was developed as an instructional tool so that behaviour expectations were taught and reinforced. We had an emphasis on catching kids being good.

“You have to touch the heart before you can reach the mind.”

This approach works for almost all students, but it has proven to be especially effective with the behaviourally-challenged or “at risk” kids. They respond well to the structure and positive

reinforcement. Combined with consistent and fair consequences this approach works. We have the behaviour data to support this claim and numerous anecdotal stories of individual student successes to illustrate the point.

That was all the “feel good stuff” and I believe that “feel good stuff” matters. You cannot successfully do the hard work of change and improvement if people do not feel safe and satisfied first.

These initial efforts set the stage for a serious focus on results. I believe that school improvement must be about results, not intentions. While it is important to care about the kids and to work hard every day, that is not enough. Many schools are full of caring, hard-working professionals but they do not necessarily focus on measurable student improvement.

Results, Not Intentions

We are now into our fifth year of this journey, and have become a truly collaborative learning community that is focused on results. I can tell you that we have seen results. Behaviour referrals to the office have dropped significantly year-over-year. Student achievement has improved considerably. We went from having 67% of students reading at grade level to over 80%. In math, we moved from 65% meeting expectations to close to 90%. First Nation student results have also improved. More important to me is the result from our satisfaction survey that shows 97% of students and parents “feel safe and welcome” at our school.

Measurable Success

Success at school is about growth and improvement. Some statistics:

* 99% Satisfaction to in-school survey:

“How safe and welcome do you feel at Khowhemun?”

* 98% Satisfaction to BC student survey:

“Do your teachers care about you?”

* 97% Satisfaction to BC parent survey:

“Do you feel welcome at your child’s school?”

Growth and improvement can also be seen in academic achievement. School goals have been set and met by parents, students and staff, as measured by the School Planning Council (SPC). We have observed the improvements in student achievement. For many years Khowhemun was essentially a **‘70:30’ school**. That means about 70% of students were meeting expectations while 30% were not. We have data to show that we are now consistently closer to **‘80:20’ in Reading** and **‘90:10’ in Math**. Far more kids are meeting expectations and we are better able to target service to those we’ve identified as struggling.

These improvements are the result of a variety of factors, most notably the focused effort of teachers and support staff. However, hard work alone was not the solution. Teachers were working just as hard when we were a ‘70:30’ school. We’re not just working harder, we’re working smarter. Much of this work is based on DuFour’s “Professional Learning Community” model and Schmoker’s “Results” approach. At Khowhemun this includes the following highlights.

Focused Goals:

The School Goals set out by the School Planning Council provided a focus. The staff was clear on which areas and specifically which students need the most attention. The goals were built around measurable targets, based on evidence. School Goals:

1. Reading Comprehension
2. Math Patterns
3. Peaceful-Problem Solving (Social Responsibility)

Through school-based in-service and teacher collaboration at staff meetings, a spotlight was placed on “best practices” that would help teachers support student learning in these goal areas. Teachers were given time to collaborate in grade groups to determine the priority of needs based on the students they had in front of them. Using diagnostic assessments at the classroom level, teachers were able to determine which groups of students required what kinds of instruction and intervention. Through action research, the school team explored new instructional strategies in an effort to find new ways to meet the needs of more students.

Teachers and support staff considered classroom, school and district assessment evidence to monitor the progress towards the school goals and targets. While teachers were free to use a range of assessments that worked for them, an effort was also made to consistently use the BC Performance Standards. Once a year this progress was compared to the provincial FSA results. Throughout it all, the focus for the individual teachers

was the learning of individual students. Parents on our SPC and PAC were included in these conversations and kept informed of the progress being made.

Parent Involvement

The Khowhemun School Planning Council has had unique parent involvement. It is one of the few SPC's to have any First Nation's parents on the council. At a school that has one-third First Nation's population, this parental involvement is important. In addition to the three parents on the SPC, all parents had the opportunity to give input on the school goals through a variety of newsletters and questionnaires. To encourage greater response rates, the school has a monthly draw for "Lunch With The Principal" which helps to ensure that the newsletters and survey questions make it home. Parents have to read, respond and return the questionnaire for the student to be eligible for the draw. Kids make sure this happens. Our monthly surveys have a terrific response rate. We get great feedback from parents.

In addition, we have made a concerted effort to make our school more parent-friendly. Many parents, especially parents of at-risk students, feel intimidated by school. We put couches and chairs in the foyer to make it feel more welcoming. Every morning, I make a point of being out front to greet kids, parents and grandparents with a smile and a "good morning". It is pleasing to watch even the most reluctant adult warm up to me (and the school in general) by this simple, friendly gesture over time. We also invite

parents in for informal, non-threatening events such as barbeques and movie nights. Our parent group actively invites volunteers for lots of fun activities.

All of this helps to build relationships and foster positive parent involvement. It also helps to build a foundation of trust and respect for those times when we have to have tough conversations about academic or behaviour concerns.

Targeted Intervention

Parents and staff set the goals. The data then helped identify the greatest areas of need in terms of both behaviour and academics. Using this information, we reallocated time and resources to address those needs. By accessing additional funds available through various grants and staffing dollars for Aboriginal students and students with English as a second language or dialect the school team was able to target specific instruction, intervention and support to the students most in need. We avoid the traditional pull-out model. Instead, we structure "sacred time" for each grade to have uninterrupted reading blocks. During these blocks, all students receive small-group reading instruction based on their reading level and/or learning style. Some students are in very intensive small-group interventions targeted to their unique needs.

We have found this targeted intervention and small group 'booster session' model to be very effective. Student progress is tracked carefully. We monitor student progress, every term, to know how well all kids are doing. The specialist

teachers track individual student gains almost daily, in order to adjust the targeted interventions quickly and efficiently. We don't wait for a once-a-year provincial FSA (Standardized Tests) score in grade 4 to tell us how we're doing. We use this information to inform our instruction, to adjust our reading group composition and to celebrate our successes.

Aboriginal Education Support

For many years, Khowhemun has had an Aboriginal student population comprising about one-third of the total population. This continues to grow. Over the last few years the staff has successfully advocated for financial support from the School District, Cowichan Tribes and Provincial and Federal funds. It's not just about the money. We believe we have carefully targeted that money to areas where we can show real progress for students. Khowhemun has additional staff in place to offer targeted small group support such as:

- * Communication for Success (Oral Language Programs)
- * Guided Reading and Guided Research
- * Early Success Projects/Early Literacy Intervention
- * Aboriginal Support Workers and Cultural Teacher Assistants
- * Healthy Schools/Prevention Worker
- * Sensory Integration Programs

Action Research

We are pleased with these results, but we know there is more to do. There is still an achievement gap to close. While our overall results have been impressive,

we know that a significant number of individual students are still struggling. We are now focused on differentiated learning, to try and meet the needs of the kids for whom all our efforts have not yet made enough of a difference. We are engaged in action research that is focused on Multiple Intelligences, in an effort to individualize instruction and focus on the strengths of the “whole child”. We are seeking more community partnerships to extend student learning beyond the classroom.

Teamwork

It’s a team approach. Specialist teachers work closely with parents, class-

room teachers and support staff. Our School-Based Team (SBT) operates as a solution-seeking group, rather than a problem-solving group. We focus on strengths, not deficiencies. The SBT meets regularly to track progress, discuss individuals in need, and re-direct the resources as required. This information is shared with the whole staff regularly. Communication is critical.

Over the last 4 years, our in-house data shows a 12-term trend in improved student results, and we can pinpoint individual progress for the students who struggle the most. While the Khowhemun team is not yet satisfied with the Grade 4 Provincial FSA scores, they

believe those test scores will trend upward over time. We don’t spend a lot of time looking at the FSA test results. Instead, we focus on the individual learners’ needs. We know each individual student who is struggling and we are targeting support and intervention to help each one make it.

This is hard work. With a focus on results, it is also rewarding work. Working as a collaborative team in an authentic learning community, we believe that we can continue to make a difference one student at a time.

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At Risk

Students in Transition

Jim Ansell
Principal, Alberni District Secondary School

About the Author:

Jim Ansell has taught and worked as a Principal and Vice Principal in BC schools for 30 years. He has taught in classes from Kindergarten to Grade 12. His experience has taken him to the interior of BC and parts of Vancouver Island. The schools have been equally varied – one a District School which housed all Special Needs Students, another a K-9 school in Bamfield a West Coast community of less than 400. Jim is currently the Principal of Alberni District Secondary in Port Alberni, on Vancouver Island – a school of 1350 students in Grades 9-12. The overwhelming focus of his work in the last eight years has been the use of structural changes to assist in meeting student needs.

Three years after a district reconfiguration, which resulted in the development of Grade 6, 7, and 8 Middle Schools and a 9 – 12 Secondary School, some of the available data made it clear that we had created a new at risk population. Our 6 year school completion rate was on a steady downward trend – even compared to Districts with similar demographics. At the same time, we knew that senior students that began Grade 12 in a position to graduate were extremely successful – approximately 95% of these students graduated in their appointed year. This matched well with any district in the

province. The final piece of the puzzle was the pass/fail rate at Grade 9 which in some cases ran to 50% and more often than not, early in the year, was greater than 25%.

During our reconfiguration, we did our homework on the research about school sizes, transitions and student success. We knew that transitions were focal points for difficulties for students. So, it was evident that we needed to look at what we were doing to bring our newest students into our building and make things work for them.

The opportunity arose to spend some time in classes with the current year's Grade 9 students. So, we asked how their transition had been. The answers were, frankly, quite startling. By early November, numerous students did not have lockers. Many did not have a full set of text books and very few knew who to talk to about these sorts of issues. We thought we had done a great job of transition. We had devoted an entire day to orienting the students and had created a

number of video presentations that had demonstrated who the key players were. Clearly our transition plan needed some revision.

One piece of the research seemed quite significant in addressing this problem – we knew that students who did not make a significant connection to an adult in the building were at much higher risk of not achieving graduation. So, how could we accomplish this connection within the structure of a large, fully semestered secondary school?

A team was created, starting with staff members who were well known for establishing good relationships with students. However, from the beginning, the team was an open group with loose membership so that anyone with an interest or an idea could be involved – including the detractors - who brought forward a number of very important factors. The main idea that the group began with was to create a situation where a single adult took a significant responsibility for a group of students so that there was a sense of

belonging for the students and a sense of responsibility for the adults for ensuring these students were never in a position where they were lacking the support that they needed to be successful.

A number of strategies were discussed including teaming of teachers, keeping classes together for half a day for the first semester and staying with a single teacher for that half day, and numerous other configurations. Ultimately, the configuration that was chosen was to have each of the teachers take on a class as their homeroom and to have that teacher keep that class together for one of the core subject areas in each semester. This meant that they would have a consistent peer group for a significant piece of each semester. It meant that a teacher would stay connected to this group of students for the whole year. Finally it meant that the teacher would take primary responsibility for connecting with and supporting this class in many ways – with parents, with other teaching staff and with all of the other support people in the school.

Once the structure was in place, it was time to look at the strategies that would enhance the success of the students. One piece was to create an opportunity for the team to meet and work collaboratively throughout the year. District office was supportive in creating the financing for the team to have release time averaging about a half day every five weeks throughout the year. The district also supported a retreat for the team members early in the year to assess the beginning of the year and to respond to arising issues – as well as to reinforce the team

concept and how the team would work together throughout the year. Many of the team members were relatively new teachers and it was important to create formal and informal mentoring opportunities. The team then began to develop a common set of expectations that would define how the students would work – agreement on homework issues, attendance and lates, communication with parents and other staff were all part of the plan set out by the team. It was also important to share these strategies with the rest of the staff – particularly those teachers who also taught grade 9 students in other subject areas so that there could be as much consistency of expectation as possible.

Further, by taking this group of students and providing them with a much closer knit community, we also hoped to create a new culture in the school. We have a vast array of extra curricular opportunities and sports programs which, while quite successful, are under subscribed and under supported for a school with a student population of 1400 students. So part of this aspect was to create a number of key activities targeted exclusively at Grade 9 students to demonstrate the benefits of involvement in school activities. A number of team members volunteered to take on this responsibility.

Halfway through the school year the measurable differences are very noticeable. Over 90% of parents are in regular contact through email or telephone with their child's teacher. Parents know who to contact as a first line in dealing with concerns and issues. Students are feeling well supported – in fact they are

not really even aware of anything unusual – which means that we have created a similar environment to what they took for granted in their Middle schools. Parent attendance at our Grade 9 parent evening was over 200 parents for a population of 340 students while the open house for the entire school of 1400 attracted less than 100 parents in spite of a barbecue dinner put on by the staff. Our opening day in September, which usually runs less than half a day, was set aside exclusively for Grade 9s, giving them full run of the school without the other 1100 students to get in their way. Grade 9 lockers were brought in to our main building, outside their homeroom class – establishing the all important “turf” that would provide shelter during the winter months.

Unfortunately, it is too early to get formal results of student success in the pass/fail realm yet, however we cannot imagine that the connection is not having the impact we desired.

What next? We are now considering a looping process where staff members would loop into the middle schools and make a connection with the students as grade 8's – before they even come to us. This would increase our staff awareness of the successful strategies that are emerging from the middle school programs and would allow Middle School teachers the opportunity to see what is happening at the secondary level. Another consideration is to have the Grade 9 classes stay together for a course in the first semester of Grade 10, allowing the transition support to remain in tact into the year after transition and to allow parents to

have continued contact with a significant adult here in the school.

The process of developing this program has already had many of the tangible goals that we hoped for met. We

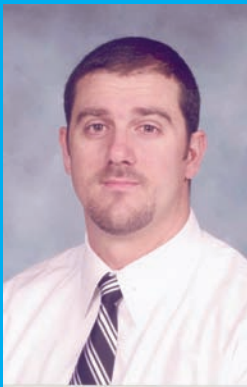
cannot imagine how this cannot have a significant impact on student achievement. Moreover, the team has had an impact on the staff in general. The methods and strategies that are being devel-

oped are routinely shared with the staff as a whole and the impact of this, over time, will benefit all students.

IT THINK I FINALLY GET IT!

One principal's journey through a world of at-risk youth

Kevin Battaglia
Principal, Rockcliffe Middle School



About the Author:

Kevin Battaglia is beginning his fifth year as the principal of Rockcliffe Middle School in the Toronto District School Board. In 2004 he published "My First 100 Days of Principalship: Attacked by bees, enlightened by a starfish, and anchored by a plan."

I got my first job in education when I was seventeen years old. I was hired as a summer camp supervisor for an inner-city day camp in Toronto. During that summer one child and one moment changed my life.

Johnny was seven or eight. He was one of those kids that from day one you realize is going to take a lot of your time and attention. He didn't fit in. He wasn't well-liked. He couldn't get along with other kids and he had an extremely short fuse. Every educator has met dozens of Johnnys. Like we all do, I befriended Johnny. I kept my eye on him and when he was alone or looked angry I tossed him a ball and we played catch. I became his "buddy."

One afternoon Johnny came to

me extremely angry for the third or fourth time that day. I was in the middle of something and for the first time I didn't stop for him. I didn't spare the time it would have taken to listen to him and help him cope with his confusing and chaotic world. I brushed him off. About a minute later a young girl ran to me screaming, "Johnny's at the top of the flag pole and he's crying. He's gonna jump!"

That day was my introduction to the world of at-risk kids. My heart has never beaten as fast or loud as it did during the next few minutes of begging, bribing, yelling, cajoling, pleading and panicking. Eventually, Johnny came down from his 30 foot perch. I went home that night, fell asleep before my head hit the pillow and woke up knowing what I was

going to do with my life. I was going to figure out kids like Johnny. How did he get so mad? What would his future hold? What could I do to help?

Today we call them “at-risk.” They are the kids who don’t fit in. They aren’t very good at following our rules and rarely “play well with others“. They have an excruciatingly hard time with our way of learning (ie. sitting still, being silent). Their parents often have more than enough love but not nearly enough skills. These “at-risk” kids grow angrier each year and sometimes, like Johnny, make really bad choices (The following October Johnny set his living room on fire and was taken into care by Children’s Aid) They are the names that we call several times a day for the years they are with us and then we forget until the night we hear about them on the six-o’clock news. I was young and passionate. I had found my calling but I had no clue what I was doing.

I rushed through university and teacher’s college working 30 hours a week in a variety of jobs dealing with the Johnnys of the world. I worked the over-night shift at a shelter for homeless youth. I ran social skills and self-control programs for young offenders. I even took my skills to the woods and developed programming for at-risk kids for a charitable organization. We tried to solve their city problems while hiking on the north shore of Lake Superior and rafting on the Ottawa River. We had fun. I was confident. I was ready to teach....but I didn’t really get it.

I began teaching as a special edu-



cation-behaviour teacher in one of Toronto’s most inner-city, socio-economically challenged, and racially charged environments. I taught there in a variety of roles for 8 years. I was a pretty good teacher (in my own mind). Kids liked me and those who were so-inclined did well in my class. Those who weren’t so-inclined and I usually agreed to disagree ... daily. I had the respect of my students, their parents and my colleagues.

I was as flexible, compassionate and equitable as I could be. I learned from Johnny always to take the time to help kids work stuff out. I coached teams, arrived early, stayed late, called parents, prepared good lessons but I still didn’t get it. I could not understand why, if I was doing it right, some kids were still failing. Some were successful well before they entered my classroom. They seemed predestined for success. Some turned it

around in my classroom and began to achieve. I am enormously proud to have been their teacher but some kept failing. I kept failing. I still didn't get it.

I met other teachers and leaders who shared a passion for turning around the lives of "at-risk" kids. We recognized the importance of kids having a positive adult role model to look up to, to share problems with and to seek advice from. We formalized an initiative called "Boys 2 Men" in our schools. We tried to address the issues facing "at-risk" boys. Recognizing that girls also face tremendous life challenges (although statistically they are not nearly as "at-risk" as our boys) other teachers created "Project Girls Only", "Sisterhood," and "Gyrlfryndz" to connect girls with mentors and positive messages. We all believed in our kids and gave them the best of us yet some of them still failed. They skipped school or were chronically late. They didn't study or do homework. They stayed out late with friends and got in trouble with the police. Eventually, some dropped-out. They couldn't play the game by our rules even with someone "on the inside" watching their back.

While doing this work I had grown into a leader and decided to pursue the path into school leadership, but I knew I still didn't get it. I took the courses, jumped through the hoops, interviewed to get on and off "the list." I vice-principled and I am now in my fourth year as principal in another inner-city Toronto school an abundance of "at-risk" kids and I am just now beginning to get it. I am just now beginning to understand the real

challenges faced by my students for whom school success seems like such an impossible dream. I think I finally get it.

Here are the five realizations that have allowed me to make meaningful changes in the way our school deals with at-risk kids.

1. At-Risk kids don't choose their life. Their life chooses them. Look at the student record of any "at-risk" student in your school and you will see one of two things. Either they have been "at-risk" from such a young age that they could not have reasonably comprehended the impact of their decisions or they began schooling with some success and something has happened in their life which has crushed their soul. They are hurt and need our help before they will choose our version of success again.

2. It isn't about parents - it is about their kids. When the Boys 2 Men program was created one of its founders, Chris Spence, wrote:

"After the family, the school stands as the most important cultural institution contributing to the education and socialization of youth. Schools have students in our care for 6 hours a day, 5 days a week, 10 months a year...thus we have the opportunity and responsibility to foster their positive growth and development."

I no longer allow myself the luxury of focussing on what a particular parent hasn't done right. I now accept that Johnny's parents loved him as much as I

love my children. I force myself to remember that I am the person best qualified to change their child's behaviour. For 15 years I have basically been calling home to tell parents that they need to do something different because despite my university degrees, professional development, and experience dealing with adolescents I can not get their child to behave. I was unwilling to own the problem. I wanted or needed to believe that the parent could solve the problem the from their work place or home. I now realize that if the parent of an "at-risk" student could have solved the problem they would have done it already and their kid wouldn't be "at-risk".

3. Mentorship and motivation is not enough. Mentors are helpful for kids. It is undoubtedly easier to be successful when you know there is someone pulling for you but for many at-risk kids mentorship isn't enough to change their habits, their behaviours or their outlook. If an at-risk student is not authentically engaged in what he or she is learning then the benefits of mentorship will eventually wear off. We need to move beyond mentorship in our thinking about at-risk students.

There is a cottage industry of motivational speakers that has emerged across the country in response to a myriad of social issues (bullying, racism, life success etc.) Motivational speakers are quick and easy. Real solutions aren't. Motivational speakers are our industry's nicotine patch or "lose 30 pounds in 30 days" diet plan. They are flashy, expen-

sive and destined to fail. Motivational speakers do not form sustainable relationships with students and therefore set students up to initiate unsustainable change.

Successful school programming for at-risk kids must be built on a foundation of their interests. It has to be done on their terms. At Rockcliffe Middle School we have created an all-boys class which serves many “at-risk“ grade 8 boys. Their program features an overnight leadership program at a sports camp, daily gym, DJ training at a professional studio, comic book and graffiti art, analyzing rap lyrics, music videos, and magazine ads as well as designing t-shirt and hats. We provide the class with sport, car, and video gaming magazines so that silent reading is natural rather than required. We are daily re-evaluating what we teach and how we teach our “at-risk” kids.

4. We need help and help is available within our community.

At-risk kids have to be convinced of how their actions today will impact their future but most have no future plans. They haven't found their talent or seen a positive pathway. If a student wants to become a teacher, child and youth worker or social worker I can help show them the pathway. If they aren't interested in my field I have little expertise to offer them but help is available in my community. Every community has entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are critical to our school's success with at-risk kids. We know that at-risk students typically have issues with authority. Entrepreneurs often share their background and have the childhood sto-

ries to go with it.

At Rockcliffe we have partnered with several community entrepreneurs to lead projects with our students. Juan Alvarez is an El Salvadorian-born refugee who arrived in Toronto with limited education or prospects. He liked art and began painting graffiti across the city. He has turned his talent into a graphic art studio providing art to advertising campaigns for companies who want an urban look in their marketing. Curtis James signed up for high school home economics class because that's where the cute girls were. Little did he know that while he was there he would discover a talent for design which he has turned into his own clothing label. He works with the students to design t-shirts and denim hats. Justin Stanberry grew up in our neighbourhood and turned his interest in drawing and writing into his own comic book series and studio. He teaches classes across the city to kids who share his interests.

At Rockcliffe we have collected and analyzed the data to support these partnerships but no data spoke more clearly than a mom who recently said, “Thank you. Up until this year all my son ever talked about was going to the NBA now he talks about DJing, designing t-shirts and writing comic books.” His eyes have opened. Our community entrepreneurs have opened them.

5. A school's commitment to “at-risk” kids starts with the principal.

It is easy to talk about finding success with all students. The slogan “Learning

for all...whatever it takes” is easier to say than do. To lead with integrity we must ask ourselves “How hard do I fight for the success of my most hard-to-serve student?” Everyday we are watched by our staffs, our students and their parents. They see us fighting hard for those things we really believe in. They put a tremendous amount of confidence in us. They believe that we can help them find solutions to problems and foster student success. It is a huge burden but it is the most essential part of school leadership. When all else fails we must to remain hopeful and courageous in order to give hope and courage to those around us.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said
*“On some positions,
Cowards ask the question is it expedient?
Vanity asks the question is it popular?
Conscience asks the question, is it right?
There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor popular, but you must do it because conscience tells you it is right....”*

In order to comprehensively address the needs of at-risk kids we may fly in the face of popular and safe thinking but if our decisions positively impact those students who need us the most then they they are right and the result is that we will have connected tomorrow's Johnnys to the positive future they deserve.

“Storefront”

A Division of LDSS

Adrienne Hiebert and Kim Tobin

There’s a big sign posted in the window on the front door of a small blue building near the Public Library, it reads **“Storefront Program – A Division of L.D.S.S.”**
WELCOME ...



Adrienne Hiebert (Teacher)



Susan Snyder (Assistant)

“Storefront”, as it is affectionately known, opened in September 2004 as a supportive alternative for students at Lakes District Secondary School in Burns Lake. Burns Lake is a small rural community driven by the forest industry in northern British Columbia. The population is 2500; however, the town services 10,000 people, including 1800 First Nations on 6 reserves. The program was designed to meet the needs of students for whom the structure of regular school does not work. It is housed in a separate building close to the main building of the school.

About Lakes District Secondary School:

- * *New school opened in September 2003*
- * *475 FTE students enrolled, 30% Aboriginal students*
- * *30 teachers, 4 clerical staff, 4 custodial staff, 4 Aboriginal Education workers (work with all LDSS students), 12 support staff (TA's), plus a Principal & Vice Principal*
- * *Programs offered in core academics as well as all technology education and fine arts (including drama, dance, and visual arts media technology)*

“Storefront” program:

- * *small number of students (45-50)*
- * *staffing support of one teacher and one child care worker*
- * *staff contacting parents regularly/frequently*
- * *offers courses in grades 10, 11, and 12*
- * *offers Dogwood, Adult Dogwood, and School Leaving Certificate*
- * *4 day school week from 8:45 am – 3:45 pm*
- * *64% Aboriginal, 36% Caucasian*

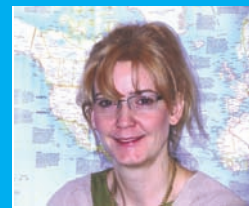
About the Authors:

Kim Tobin is in her first year as principal of Lakes District Secondary School. She was vice-principal of LDSS for the 3 years prior. Kim completed her Master's Degree in



Educational Counselling in 2001. She completed her Bachelor's of Education degree in 1985. She has taught at the elementary, junior and senior secondary levels, as well as teaching alternate programs.

Adrienne Hiebert is in her first year as the teacher of the Storefront program. She has taught at LDSS her entire teaching career.



Storefront offers students:

- * *increased connectedness – it's about creating relationships and building trust between students and staff to foster a willingness to learn.*
- * *flexibility in attendance requirements, scheduling, and course completion with expectations and structure, as well as, timelines for course completion.*
- * *who are pregnant, parenting, and/or working a chance to earn his/her diploma*

The **Storefront** students are still part of the LDSS student body. They are welcome in the main building before school, after school and at lunch time. The students also participate in LDSS sports, attend our assemblies, and other school activities. During regular class time, **Storefront** students are to be at the Storefront. At this time, there is no partial/split programming for students to attend **Storefront** as well as LDSS.



Courses offered:

- English 10
- Science 10
- EMath 10
- PMath 10
- SS 10
- Planning 10
- PE 10
- HEF 10
- English 11
- Communications 11
- Science & Tech 11
- EMath 11
- PMath 11
- SS 11
- FM 11
- PE 11
- FDS 11
- Psyc 11
- English 12
- Communications 12
- FNS 12
- FM 12
- PE 12
- FDS 12
- CCN 12
- Law 12
- BIM 12



Healthy Life Style:

During the summer a full size, well-equipped kitchen was added to the building. This allows students to learn about nutrition and cooking. Although the schedule for individual students is flexible, there is a requirement for students to be at school by 9:00 am on cooking days. This encourages students to do one hour of course work prior to foods class. Having this expectation has proved to be very good in getting students up early – food is always a wonderful motivator - for any age!



Each day from 2:30 pm – 3:00 pm interested students go for a walk around the track with their teacher. This affords students the opportunity to talk with their teacher in a relaxed environment, as well as participate in physical education. In the near future, students will have access to the Burns Lake Band’s gymnasium. Participating in team sports will help foster the sense of community and healthy competition amongst students.

Another new element to the program are the “Girls Only” and “Boys Only” days. This is a time for community members such as health nurses, police officers, and counsellors to casually talk to students about drugs, alcohol, sex education, parenting, etc. The day begins with a relaxed breakfast and informal talk and continues with some fun activities and debriefing.

Successes:

Students who have not been successful in the main LDSS school building, have for the most part been successful at **Storefront**. The speed at which students progress is their decision. Students have completed requirements for both Dogwood Diplomas and School Completion Certificates. Graduating students take part in the Commencement Ceremonies at LDSS each year. In the first year 2 students completed graduation requirements and last year, (the second year of the program) 6 students completed their graduation requirements. In its first year, students completed 48 courses. As the program developed the number of courses completed increased to 65. With continued growth within the program, course completion numbers are expected to continue to rise.

Attendance is one of the biggest challenges at **Storefront**. Similar to regular school, if students are absent, they are neither learning nor completing assignments. **Storefront** has implemented new initiatives to address absenteeism (Foods program, P.E., Boys Only Days and Girls Only Days) to encourage students to attend more regularly.

The perception of **Storefront** continues to change from it being a “dumping ground” to “Wow! Kids actually accomplish something from there” image. It is because of this initial perception that causes some parents to be upset when their son/daughter has been told **Storefront** is their one option left to continue their education. They think their child has no hope of graduating. But statistics have shown students are successful and have graduated from the program. As word spreads through the different communities within Burns Lake, they are coming to accept this program as a quality option for their children.

Storefront is not only an excellent option for the students who have been sent to or requested the program, but is also positive for the culture of LDSS. Students, who have been struggling socially or academically, often take their frustrations out on staff members or their peers. Once students have been removed from the situation they are able to act responsibly when visiting the main school building, due in part, to the increased connection and support from staff at **Storefront**.

Nonetheless, sometimes it takes students awhile to feel comfortable being at “**the stupid Storefront**” as they occasionally say. Usually within a short period of time most change their attitude and say things such as, “**Oh yeah, Storefront is way better than over there.**”

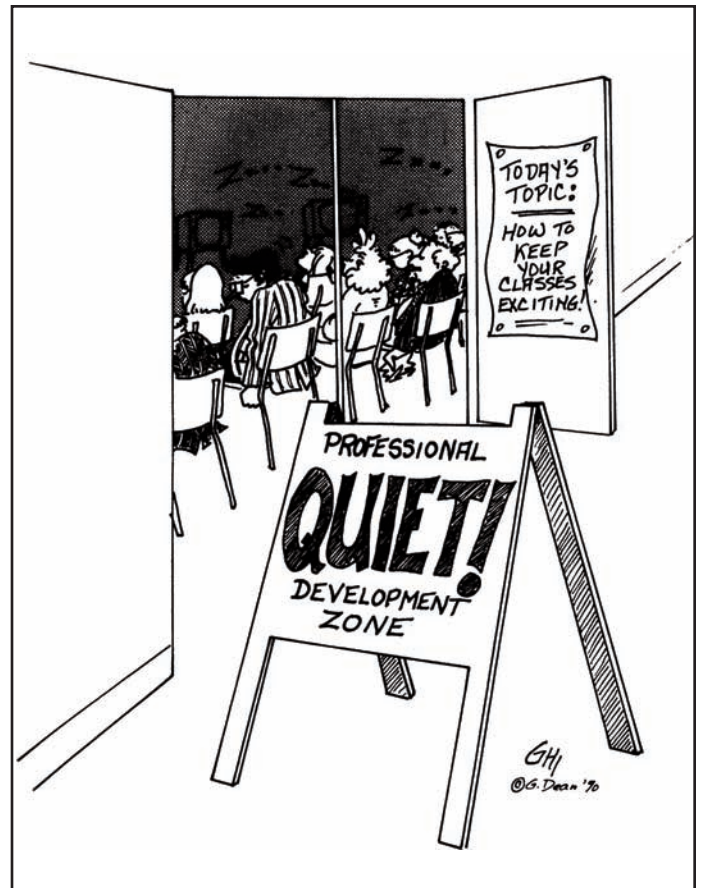
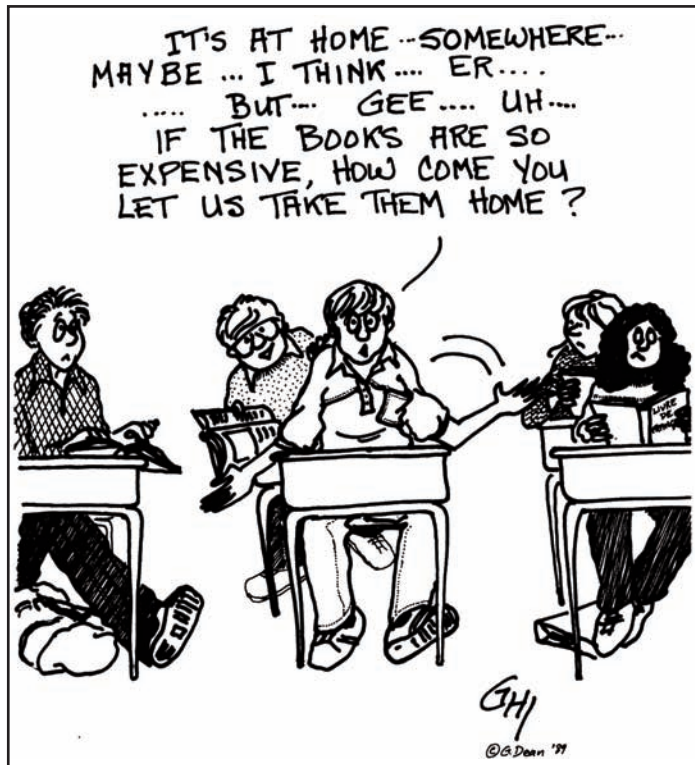
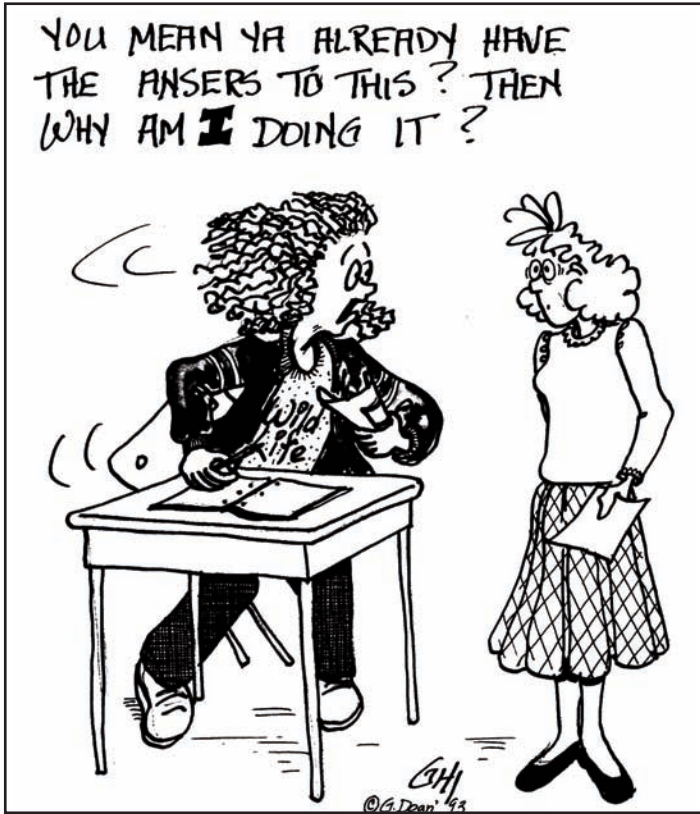
Recent Accomplishments / Future Plans:

The Aboriginal Education Department at LDSS recently asked the **Storefront** students to cater the parent/teacher social. The students made homemade hors-d’oeuvres for over 60 people while earning lab credits towards Foods 10,11, or 12. The event was held from 3:30 to 6:30 in the multi-purpose room at the high school. In addition to doing the shopping and all the cooking, nine storefront students stayed after school to arrange, serve, and clean-up the food. Their day ended at 7:00 p.m., putting in a full ten hours of school.



In the future, Mrs. Hiebert, the teacher of the program, Mrs. Snyder, teaching assistant and their students and families will choose a new name for the program. With the assistance of Mr. Hofer, the woodwork teacher at LDSS, and the CNC router machine, a sign will be made and placed on the **Storefront** building announcing the program’s new name.

On the Lighter side.....



Canadian Association of Principals 2007 Annual Conference

Connecting Leaders

Vancouver
Fairmont Hotel Vancouver
April 11–13, 2007

A national conference dedicated
to connecting leaders
— their stories, their networks &
their best practices —
across the country
and through disciplines

Developed and
sponsored by
The BC Principals'
&
Vice-Principals'
Association

Information & secure
online registration at
<http://www.bcpvpa.bc.ca>

Quality Leadership in Education

Navigating Information:

Finding the Right College or University

Deciding which post-secondary institution to attend is as important as the decision to pursue a post-secondary education in the first place. Prospective students want to ensure they are a good fit in a particular institution and do not end up plodding through their days disconnected, unenlightened or bored. These symptoms are all too common and are likely to result in a student deciding to transfer or drop out. The end result is neither good for the student or the institution.

Individuals can work to prevent, or at least reduce, the chances of improper student fit. The critical and costly decision of where to study requires work. The decision-making process is often influenced by the values and attitudes of family, peers, high school guidance counsellors, principals and teachers. These individuals work hard to decode hundreds of educational options and pass relevant information on. There are three key things that can be done to ensure the right decision is made.

The first thing is to understand the decision begins early in high school. Youth need to be encouraged to aim high. Individuals need to have their full potential unleashed and not stifled. This often means achieving a balance between academics and extra-curricular. Students need to be discouraged from academic coasting. Taking easy courses helps nobody. Individuals who do not get the proper challenge are not improving admission chances. In fact, it may actually work against an individual. No matter how good a student's grades are, it is often the composition of the subjects rather than the performance that matters. Involvement in extra-curricular activities provides a strong foundation. Individuals build social networks and learn valuable skills that will prove invaluable in future educational pursuits or the labour market.

Second, prospective students and their families need to be encouraged to research educational options. Rising educational costs have significantly changed attitudes towards information. Individuals are demanding a wide array of information to inform themselves on educational options.

This is precisely why the Globe and Mail and the Educational Policy created the University Report Card Navigator. This free, web-based tool allows prospective students a chance to visit an interactive portal and search characteristics about Canadian institutions important to them. It is - essentially - a matching exercise.

The final piece of advice is to actually test-drive institutions. Contact colleges and universities to find out information on campus tours. Engage in all the campus has to offer; Eat at the cafeteria or food outlets; Visit faculty offices, the library and campus bookstore; Prepare questions and conduct your own satisfaction surveys; Drop by the student government. Inquire about their services and opportunities. Talk to current students - they are there for the same reason prospective students are thinking about attending the institution.

Better information can free individuals from the false notion that name, size and prestige are all that matters in the selection of an institution and work to ensure the investment of time and money leads to a lifetime of economic and social returns.

Sean Junor is the Manager of Knowledge Mobilization of the Educational Policy Institute (EPI). EPI is an international, non-profit think tank dedicated to the study of educational opportunity and has recently created a new educational search tool - the University Report Card Navigator (www.universitynavigator.com).

Attention Deficit Disorder and Girls What YOU should know?

Cindy Matthews



About the Author:

Cindy Matthews lives and works in southern Ontario. She is employed by the Waterloo Region District School Board as a vice-principal of care, treatment, custody and corrections sites. Many of the youth at these sites are impacted by multiple concerns including attentional issues. She has learned about ADD and its effect on learners after a lengthy career in education in both elementary and secondary settings.

The VP listens as Lili, a high school English teacher, complains, *“That flipping Kathleen. She never listens to me. I had to kick her out today. When I asked her what she was doing in her pencil case, she said, ‘Nothing’. Nothing all right! She wasn’t listening, I tell you. She was fidgeting and not paying any attention at all to my lesson. This is important stuff, you’ve got to know this, Frank. We’ve got to get through all this for the*

literacy test.....”

As administrators, we have often heard about these learners during informal chats with staff or at school-based team meetings. They are in primary, junior, intermediate and secondary school classrooms. These students do not often cause a lot of problems in that they are not typically sent to the office because of overt behavioural concerns. In fact, they are often really quiet.

Further, they seem to be bored or ‘out of it’, existing in the classroom in a dreamlike or spacey state. Following directions is difficult and they never seem to get started on their work. These are the students who have to read and reread materials to get at the essence of the text and yet they are often ‘good readers’ who can decode material just fine. They exhibit inconsistent task performance—one day they can do it and the next they cannot. These learners are giggly and talkative. Their report cards tell us that they need to be reminded to listen.

Boy, are they disorganized! Their stuff is everywhere. Their teachers pull their hair out in frustration because these students never have a pencil, can’t find their agendas, are late for class and hand in assignments past the due date, even though it might be done and sitting

in their lockers. Their issues are chronic and occur in a multitude of settings. Who are these unique learners? Keep reading to understand about girls with Attention Deficit Disorder (also known as ADD with or without hyperactivity) and what you should consider to assist them to be more effective learners.

Attention Deficit Disorder with or without Hyperactivity (ADD-H), a neurobiological disorder, is diagnosed more often in boys than girls. Research says that girls actually have ADD more often than the diagnostic statistics would suggest. But, because they tend not to exhibit acting-out behaviours, they are frequently undiagnosed. Some estimate that girls are under-diagnosed 50 to 75 % of the time! Girls tend to have the predominantly inattentive type of ADHD. This disorder affects children and teens and in most cases, continues into adulthood so it has lifelong impact. Without intervention and treatment, children with ADD can result in serious social, emotional, behavioural and academic issues. This disorder often co-exists with other issues such as learning disabilities and generalized anxiety. It has no cure. ADD has serious implications for female students. So, what is a school to do with girls who present with the symptoms of ADD?

What is this? Toward recognizing the symptoms:

Just by reading this article, you are showing an interest in females with ADD. Continue to read and learn about this disorder and the specifics for girls in your school. Recognize its symptoms and consider its possibility when speaking with female learners and their families about learning difficulties. While you and your staff cannot make a diagnosis of ADD in any students, acquainting yourself with its indicators and keeping a list of those to share with families is helpful.

Huh? Paint me a picture:

The following list of symptoms / traits can be observed in girls for whom you suspect ADD or for whom you have a confirmed diagnosis. It might include any or all of the following:

- Distracted easily by outside stimuli*
- 'Spaced-out'*
- Difficulty working independently*
- Careless errors especially in mathematics and mechanics in writing*
- Inconsistent performance*
- Forgetful*
- The need to reread materials*
- Difficulty concentrating on the task at hand*
- Easily confused*
- Never seems to listen when spoken to*
- Failure to finish tasks started*
- Frustration*
- Poor study skills*
- Little or no awareness of time*
- Complains of poor sleeping routines.*
- Says, "I'm tired" at lot.*
- Might seem to be socially immature*
- Inability to self-regulate behaviour (says, "I didn't do it.").*
- Seems to lack awareness or ownership for issues.*
- Becomes confrontational / defiant when*

challenged by a teacher or another significant adult.

Tends to look at issues from a black-white perspective (extremes).

Embarrassment. These youth tend to experience the chaos of the world in every situation they confront but they do not know why they act this way. They tend to feel 'out of it' but do not know how to compensate. They forget social / academic engagements while they have good intentions to comply with the request to do something. They feel intense shame. Seem to get 'in trouble' in class for things like talking out or answering, 'I don't know' when the teacher asks the student a question. Giggle or 'speed-talk' in response to queries. Often have not processed the question asked and, therefore, cover up by giggling or refusing to answer.

Complain of pain, such as extreme headaches or stomachaches.
Seem to have a need to urinate frequently.
May do oral gratification behaviours e.g., sucking on clothing, chewing on pens, pencils, collars.

Sometimes she is so 'minimal' in the classroom, the teacher is totally unaware of her name or her needs

Teachers complain about these students. They notice that the child is always talking to peers or speaking out, has a messy desk / locker, work is messy, child does not listen to them or follow through on work. Student complains that the teacher picks on her, centres her out and makes her feel embarrassed and not good enough. Tapping and any other noise nearby drive her to distraction. She gets upset if someone is coughing, hiccupping, sneezing, or even just breathing near her. Her patience threshold is minimal.

Match-point! How to choose the right teacher:

Interesting how a teacher can make or break a student. One year, a student can truly glow and grow with the

appropriate teacher match up.

Administrators need, where possible, to place girls with ADD with a teacher who is not hypercritical, one who is flexible and willing to accommodate to her learning needs. This teacher would have extensive knowledge of ADD and acceptance of the behaviours listed above. Teacher tolerance and close home/school communication are paramount for success. This teacher would clarify expectations and assist the student by having a multi-sensory approach to teaching.

The classroom environment would have structure and predictability. Homework would be limited. This teacher would use various ways of teaching in order to keep the student engaged. The student would be taught organizational skills and use of an agenda would be monitored daily. This teacher would respect the learning challenges of this student and would strive to assist her, not embarrass her by centering her out.

Special for Girls and not Boys:

ADD often is hidden in girls until they approach puberty. Administrators and teachers need to recognize that what appears to be 'laziness' can indeed be a student in chaos. Try not to be fooled by an inconsistent performance pattern in a female student. Inconsistency is a trademark characteristic of this disorder. Hormones in young adolescent girls can have a huge impact on the onset of symptoms.

Remember that for years a young female learner could give the appearance



of looking fine and then suddenly there's a huge change. In society, girls learn to show compliant behaviours but by the onset of puberty, with an ADD profile, the ability to self-regulate is hugely compromised. In fact, it is not uncommon to have no symptoms prior to age seven, whereas with young boys, attentional issues are often much clearer in early primary grades. Don't be fooled by a teacher from the past who makes judgmental associations and assumptions about the female learner with ADD. Remember to encourage your teachers to make accommodations for girls with ADD because it is okay and fair to make accommodations with special needs.

Now what? She's fifteen years old and acting like a nut!

If she has ADD, she cannot help her behaviour. Keep in contact with families and do NOT say the child has ADD unless an assessment has been completed

confirming this. Share objective observations with the school-based team. Do share the observed behaviours with families and encourage them to follow through with an assessment by a psychologist or appointment with a physician. Also share how the school will accommodate to her learning needs.

To IEP or not? That is the question:

Individual education plans should be written for these students, outlining learning needs, strengths, accommodations and any modifications required. Test / assessment adaptations should also be clearly outlined. Universal design should be considered when planning for all students in a classroom and then tweaking those design plans is recommended for female students with specific ADD needs.

Areas to consider for accommodations are:

- Testing and assessment*
- Language instruction: written and reading*
- Classroom design—environmental accommodations*
- Homework routines*
- Organizational strategies*
- Social skills*
- Memory strategies*
- Use of technology to improve legibility and to assist with reading*
- Safety plans, especially for younger children or students who are suicidal*

So, you're growing up! What to consider for adolescent females with ADD:

While characteristics of ADD can sometimes diminish for a student, often those symptoms manifest differently. They can look like defiance, high-risk behaviours like drug experimentation, depression, pregnancy, conflict with the law, suicidal behaviours like 'cutting' and traffic violations, like speeding.

Remember to monitor grade patterns for students in senior elementary and secondary school. Have your special education,

guidance and / or student success teacher track all students to examine patterns of decline in grades and attendance.

Encourage parents to get an assessment of their child's learning strengths if one has not been completed or to obtain a newer, up-to-date assessment if one has not been completed in many years. These types of assessment are particularly helpful in that they outline learning strategies for the school to implement.

Coaching a young adolescent female about her ADD and speaking honestly about self-advocacy are important skills to introduce in intermediate and senior school grades. Her input in decision making is crucial as she learns to deal with her challenges. They also benefit from direct coaching on how to approach teachers respectfully and maturely. Speaking to teachers about the kinds of accommodations that are helpful to her is a huge life skill.

Setting up a communication system with families is helpful to the teen female with ADD. Frequent progress reports, email correspondence and telephone calls / meetings can assist families in closely monitoring the success of their needy student.

Transitional plans may assist the student in anticipating and adapting to the changes of grade / school. Dealing with multitudes of teachers can be accommodated by giving the student a timetable early and colour-coding the schedule. Matching the colours on a timetable with binder / duo tang choices can assist with organization.

We need to recognize that a

female preteen and adolescent can appear physically mature while she can be a 'little girl' inside, with huge social and learning needs. We must monitor placing unrealistic expectations and goals on her.

Structure, structure, structure!

Females with ADD need structure and routine. A case manager at school is someone who can monitor progress, advise and intervene in communication among teams of teachers and the home. Peer mentorship may be considered, if closely monitored.

Remember, these learners benefit from interesting, relevant learning, school which uses and taps into their areas of strength. Avoid overly criticizing this student as that approach is far from helpful or motivating.

On a positive note:

Learners with ADD have many positive traits. For example, she can be

highly energetic and positive. Her strong verbal skills, paired with her creativity can allow for interesting perspectives to be shared during class discussions and debates. She is often extremely caring, willing to help at all costs. She tends to be fun to be around and has a good heart. She is gregarious, humourous and outgoing. Novel approaches to problems are her forte. She can be your risk-taker who is willing to do an improv when no one else in class will. You would want her in an emergency situation because she can think on her feet.

ADD is treatable. School personnel in partnership with families can assist females with this condition to be successful. The earlier, of course, that assistance can occur, the better. Living with this condition successfully and as a contributing member of school and society is possible. Helping her to recognize and celebrate her talent areas is paramount for her self-esteem.

RESOURCES used in this article:

<http://www.4-adhd.com/girls-add-differences.html>

<http://www.aisgw.org/documents/pastPrograms/quinnADD.pdf>

http://www.addvance.com/help/women/girl_checklist.html

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“AT
RISK”

ADMINISTRATORS

Gerald W. Fussell

It is the goal of a democratic society to ensure that all its members receive an education that enables them to become personally fulfilled and publicly useful, thereby increasing the strength and contributions to the health and stability of that society.

The purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable all learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy, democratic and pluralistic society and a prosperous and sustainable economy.

Preamble to the British Columbia School Act



About the Author:

*Gerald W. Fussell, B.A., B. Ed., M. Ed., co-owns an educational consulting company. He has a Masters Degree from the University of Victoria in Curriculum Leadership and as Vice-Principal of Lake Trail Middle School he played a pivotal role in improving school-wide literacy and school tone. He is now Vice-Principal of École Aspen Park Middle School in Comox and working in a three-track environment. His students have profitably published four books, three on BC History, including the award winning *Blazing Paddles: Historical Fiction of British Columbia*. Gerald has worked with teams of teachers creating curriculum projects such as the CPR Critical Challenge and Course Concept Mapping. In addition to his classroom and school work, he has given presentations at the provincial and national level, and has had numerous pieces published in professional journals and public media. Recently he wrote a chapter on no marks assessment for a book due to be published this spring.*

While this heady aim is lauded in the western world for its scope, the word that carries the largest impact is very small: “all.” “All learners” is an awful lot of learners. “All members” of society is also an awful lot. This legislation clearly states that our system has the responsibility, by law, to “ensure that all [of] its members receive an education that enables them to become personally fulfilled and publicly useful.” Therefore, we need to ensure that each and every little squirt that comes through our doors, leaves those same proverbial doors personally fulfilled and able to be useful to the public. This is no short order.

The students in our schools are finding increased danger at decreased ages. Latch-key kids are not new, but the risks they are exposed to have increased. We have 12-year old prostitutes, male and female, in our schools. We have 11-year old children who steal cars, brandish weapons, and have sexually abused others. We have children with maladies of all kinds – likely not that different than in the past, other than our awareness of them – and limited resources to address their needs. ESL, ADHD, FAS, and many other acronyms that include other letters of the alphabet are prevalent and carry expectations with them. Drugs are more

powerful than ever before, and more prevalent. We have 7-year olds who do marijuana regularly. Teens are going to parties to find “mountains” of free cocaine. Crystal Meth and E are used more common than we even know. Poverty is common; commonly ignored, and even more commonly we do not know how to address it when we see it. And, to top it all off, the society that we operate in has shifted to one of entitlement, that is, a society of rights without responsibilities: parents and their children.

The following was found on the bathroom wall of a Middle School:

All babies cry in the same language, but with different tones. Some are doomed when conceived, the Creative pleasure fast forgotten. At birth not equal: more diverse than their conceptions. For five years, an indelible mark is etched, and then they are presented to be educated, without discrimination.

Schooled

Children don't choose a home
some are blessed
we expect the same
regardless.

In one classroom we have:
two income families,
stay-at-home families,
single working parent families,
no-parent families,
healthy kids,
sickly kids,
clean kids,

dirty kids,
loved kids,
conditionally loved kids,
and a few completely unloved kids.
But they're all equal.

Our schools take the unwashed,
the unloved, and prepare citizens.
Our schools take the privileged,
the pampered, and prepare citizens.

Our schools take them all, but do
we educate everyone's child?

Our schools are comprised of ice-
bergs:
We only see the smallest, most pro-
tected piece of each person.

“How dare Lisa fall asleep in class
doing chapter questions on the
fall of Rome?”
She did two tricks last night while
her mother did ten.

“Why didn't Johnnythin do his
homework, again?”
Visit his home to get the ride of
your choice:
Crystal Meth, Cocaine, Heroin, or
whore.

Dan's waiting for his mom, she left
for two hours – three weeks ago.
“She'll be home any day,” his voice
quivers. He's on his way to the
apartment
to care for his 7-year old sister.
He wants to believe: he needs to
believe.
He's 13: he attends my school.

The Twins don't do schoolwork.
They arrive late, leave when they

want to and
read 4 grade levels lower than
their age – or so the teachers
think – can't test them.
Mom won't allow them to receive
any extra support.

She's been a victim of
labels.
She wants a safe place during the
day, without redress:
It's not the street and they're ver-
tical – better than she was at 14.
They stopped coming to my
school.

He was 5 when his 8-year old sister
gave him his first smoke.
At half-a-pack a day, he was 7 for
his first joint.
Dope's more plentiful than food.
Dad's in jail, mom's visiting a dis-
tant boyfriend.
He's alone. He's 14.
He comes to my school

Lynn had her first John at 11,
mom was passed out;
He was mad.
She's self-sufficient;
pays for her own drugs.
She comes to my school.

Kryz presented himself to be edu-
cated,
After 3 years on the street.
He was free artist with clear
social views.
He was 15, tattooed, chained,
leathered, and biggest in the
school,
Except for Mr. Johnson, the PE
teacher.
How does non-conformity handle
conformity?

Mike hit the pit in East Vancouver
 –
 Heroin, Smack, and was never
 sober –
 Mike had a boy: Mike's wife cheated.
 Mike was crushed and ran from
 life.
 the living dead
 She punishes the boy, every
 chance.
 So, Mike has the boy: Mike loves
 him deeply.
 He has ADHD, Tourettes, low IQ
 and no self-esteem.
 He has a clear sense of justice,
 a desperate,
 unrequited,
 need for love.
 Mike's unfit to be a parent, but he
 tries, on his terms.
 His child comes to my school.

Other kids in my school are:
 15-year-old parents,
 Legally over-drugged,
 Self-medicated,
 Autistic,
 Uncontrollably impulsive,
 Controllably impulsive.

Two have Asperger's syndrome,
 Three have terminal cancer,
 Cerebral palsy and FAS own others,
 And hunger wracks many.

Some are:
 Average,
 Normal,
 Athletic,
 Academic,
 Social,

MENSA projects.

They are in my class,
 So were you.

All are talented.
 All have special needs.

They, like you and me, have been
 presented to be educated, with-
 out discrimination.
 How can we deny them this?

We do.

What can we teach them?
 What can they teach us?

We are judged by the way we treat
 the most vulnerable.

We are judged.
 We are schooled.

We are not one and not the same,
 But here we are as on a darkling
 plain.

What training do we have to
 address these diverse needs? Do we have
 training in counseling? Do we have train-
 ing in social work? Heck, some of us
 don't even have kids of our own. Many
 are working in contexts that are complete-
 ly foreign. All of us operate in the realm
 of divergent and conflicting interests.

Teachers are daily forced to bal-
 ance the diversity in their classrooms and
 their philosophies: some do not believe
 the troubled children should be allowed in
 school. What can we do to support these
 teachers so that they can support the chil-

dren that need the most support?

Parents are conflicted by the
 diversity in the class and their own self
 interest. Either they want to know why
 these "trouble makers" or "bad kids" are
 allowed to destroy the learning in the
 class, or they want to know what's being
 done to support their child who's bored
 and misunderstood. Parents are torn
 between being intimidated by the institu-
 tion and protection of their precious baby.
 However, parents are, more so than any
 other age, at the mercy of their offspring.
 Increasingly, the children are calling the
 shots and some parents are realizing this,
 too late. Both exert their "rights" but few
 accept the responsibilities attached to
 those rights.

School Boards, and by extension
 all others within the system, are faced
 with fiscal complications and challenges.
 Many of them are forced to repair the sus-
 pect decision-making of their predeces-
 sors. These vacillations in philosophy,
 approach, and planning leave the system
 vulnerable and insecure. Many boards are
 faced with right versus right moral dilem-
 mas, but few have the ability to navigate
 the landscape effectively. How can they
 support the "at risk" children? What
 training do they have to make such impor-
 tant decisions?

So, our responsibility is to pre-
 pare *all* children to become positive and
 productive citizens. As administrators, we
 carry this weight squarely on our shoul-
 ders. We are responsible for creating pro-
 grams that meet the diverse needs of our
 students, cognizant of what goes on
 before we get them, while we have them,

and after they leave us. We are responsible for supporting the teachers who work daily with our cherubs, with limited knowledge about their needs and even more limited training to meet these needs. We are responsible for helping parents navigate the developmental changes their children experience, while bearing their frustration and hostility for the challenges they might face. We need to take what our School Boards give us, and make it work for all partner groups. We need to provide moral stewardship, educational leadership, organizational leadership, and cultivate relationships.

A civilization is judged by the way it treats its weakest members: how are we to be judged? We are the leaders of our society. The buck stops with us: we are responsible for the state of our society and must find ways to support the increasingly complex needs of our most vulnerable. To do this we need training, knowledge, and time. How can we get these?

As for the first two, on-going professional development helps. Taking advantage of opportunities to work with peers can help provide the knowledge that is lacking. Active participation in local Chapters is key to this. Participation in provincial or national groups also provides one with contacts vital to growth and development. Events such as the April 11-13 Canadian Association of Principals conference to be held in Vancouver, provide leaders with support and learning. In fact this conference is focusing on making connections nationally. Opportunities exist; however, we need to seek them and take ownership of them. Having said that, training for the realities of our work is woefully lacking and needs to be addressed in a meaningful way.


The only way to get the last one, time, is to take it; that is, to find a way to protect ourselves from ourselves. We take on way too much. When do we ever say “no” to someone else’s needs? We need to triage elements and re-align expectations; but, only we can do that. We need to re-create our jobs and the expectations of our jobs.

We are charged with the responsibility of fixing society, and we do a good job of it. We should be proud of what we do for our communities, but we must continue to strive to do better. Our most vulnerable children need us. We are the key to their futures. Good enough is not.

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Preparing Students for our Shrinking Globe

Nicole Asquith

With our world becoming smaller and smaller, students must receive educational travel opportunities as part of their education in order to be prepared for their adult lives. Their future economy will cross borders, governments will have greater involvement with each other, and people from other nations will work with our students whether in Canada or in their home lands. Whether educational travel results in students understanding how our Federal government functions or introduces young people to other cultures, travel is essential to a complete education.

It's in everyone's best interest for schools to prepare students for our shrinking globe. While educators, parents, and travel providers strive to provide travel opportunities that are stimulating and educationally sound, we must also do all we can to provide trips that are as safe as we can make them. The Student & Youth Travel Association (SYTA®) is working on a number of initiatives to make travel safer. At SYTA we believe that safe educational travel comes when a partnership of principals, teachers, travel providers, and parents become part of a team focusing on giving young people the best in educational travel.

The foremost mode of transportation for school travelers is the motor coach, and SYTA has initiated a program to improve student and youth travel motor coach safety. We plan through this initiative to identify competencies for key stakeholders, such as teachers and principals, and then provide an educational program that will help them understand the best approaches to providing safe travel.

"This campaign will have a number of areas to help principals focus on safety when delivering educational travel programs to their students," reports Judd Gerber, chair of SYTA's Safety Taskforce, and president of New York's Gerber Tours.

"We anticipate that attention will be given to what to look for in selecting a student and youth tour operator, selecting chaperones, rules that encourage motor coach safety, and training chaperones and trip participants, among other topics. For example, it's not unusual that a traveler could feel tired or ill during a stop and want to stay on the motor coach to rest. That is appropriate, but chaperones and teachers should understand that a student should never be left alone on a bus with the driver. Instead, a chaperone, preferably one with access to the student's medical information form, should remain with the youngster."

While SYTA is currently working on its motor coach safety project, as practicing tour operators who have organized and administered millions of trips, we already know there are a number of steps that should be taken to provide a safe trip. Principals can play an important role in these areas, whether they are personally taking the steps below or assuring someone on their staff is—

The most important step leading to a successful travel experience for students, whether it's educationally valid, safe, or stimulating and exciting for the youngsters, is to select a quality tour provider. When it comes to safety, experience is the keyword. A tour operator who has worked in the field knows the hotels that offer a secure environment for travelers, places to visit that have an incident-free record, motor coach operators who have a safe record, and the best routes to follow. Before ever signing up for a tour, the school should ask for and study an operator's references and discuss possible operators with colleagues in other schools. Not only should a travel provider's record be reviewed, schools should also inquire about the professional development an operator has received. For exam-

ple, SYTA offers an annual conference and an annual summit in addition to teleconferences to its members and many of the sessions focus on safety. Any Canadian travel company's reputation can be checked with the Canadian Information Gateway, www.consumerinformation.ca, or with Industry Canada's Strategis, www.strategis.ic.gc.ca.

Principals should also assure that teachers, chaperones and students are thoroughly versed in important safety information before embarking on a trip. Safety checklists can be developed and reviewed with students and their parents as part of the sign-up process. There are a number of simple steps to consider:

Never carry too much cash or you will be a target. Rather, use traveler checks or be prepared to access cash from A.T.M. machines.

Don't wear expensive jewelry as this too could make you a target for robbery.

Do not travel alone at night or accept rides or other favors from strangers.

Understand local traffic laws. They can change province to province and especially country to country. In some areas pedestrians have the right of way when walking on heavily traveled streets; in others they don't.

Never give out your hotel room number to strangers, even someone you met on a tour that you believe would really be great "to get to know better."

Never enter your hotel room if it is unlocked. Rather, report the situation to the front desk and/or your teachers or a chaperone.

Whether traveling on a motor coach or airplane, always understand the emergency procedures.

Work with parents in preparing students for a safe trip. Principals and schools should ask parents to review safety rules with their child before the trip begins.

This is one great reason to prepare a safety checklist or provide safety brochures. Not only will this help students better understand the safety tips, it will also demonstrate to parents that the school is focusing on safe travel.

Be sure that there is a contact available to the school 24 hours a day. A principal never knows when a parent will need to reach a student or a question may develop at the school. It's essential that consistent communication be available.

Determine whether there are special programs or services available on a trip that will lead to a safer environment. This is another area the principal or trip leader should cover with a tour operator before signing up for a trip. For example, some hotels and some tour operators offer a program called "Night Watch," where security people are hired to patrol hallways and corridors to assure that people aren't roaming the hotel to cause trouble for guests. Such a program may add a few dollars to the cost of a trip, but it can head off problems and re-assure parents.

There are numerous advantages to educational travel for students. Visits to museums or historical sites can bring classroom lessons alive, and students can build a better understanding of people from other nations when they travel abroad. A school that is providing such opportunities is giving its students a complete education—an education that will prepare them to accept their role in an increasing small world. By paying attention to safety concerns and taking steps in planning educational travel, principals, teachers and tour operators can assure that students are provided this essential aspect of learning without having undue concerns about their safety.

Nicole Asquith works for School Voyagers in Toronto and is the immediate past president of the Student & Youth Travel Association.

Principals, teachers, parents and students can obtain a wealth of free information on travel preparation from the Student & Youth Travel Association's web site, www.syta.org.

A downloadable brochure "Travel Safety Tips" is available along with a "Trip Planning Guide," information on scholarships through the SYTA Youth Foundation, a list of professional travel planners, and links to other travel resources.

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(samples of seminars follow, see website for complete listings)

- Personal Safety - What Worries You?
- Flu Pandemic Planning**
- Emergency Planning - A Different Perspective**
- Violence in the Workplace**
- Due Diligence for the Decision Makers
- The New Asbestos Regulations**
- Business Track for Safety Professionals
- How Modified Work Affects Your Costs**
- Return to Work - Ergonomic Interventions**
- Back to the Basics for Safety Professionals
- Increasing the Return on Training Investment**
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IF IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE HERE, WHY DOES IT MAKE SENSE WHEN YOU DRIVE?

Visit www.potanddriving.cpha.ca to find out more about driving high.

A message from the Canadian Public Health Association. Financial assistance provided by Canada's Drug Strategy, Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.

***The Pot and Driving Campaign:
Two-year Initiative Culminates in December 2006
Launch of Youth Website
targeted to Underage Drinkers***

Canadians between the ages of 14-25 have one of the highest rates of pot use in the world. Many young people who choose to drive while or after using pot do not believe they are impaired or that driving high can increase their chances of being involved in a motor vehicle crash. Drug use surveys have indicated that the rate of driving under the influence of pot surpasses that of alcohol.

On November 21, 2005, with funding from Canada's Drug Strategy, Health Canada, the Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA) launched a national campaign to raise awareness among young Canadian drivers and passengers of the risks of cannabis-impaired driving. Under the guidance of a National Advisory Committee of experts, the Pot and Driving campaign was developed through an extensive review of current

evidence and input from both professionals and Canadian youth. Approximately 70,000 campaign posters were distributed across Canada. The campaign website at www.potanddriving.cpha.ca includes resources targeted to youth, parents, teachers and anyone else who wants to discuss pot and driving. These discussion materials include:

- Discussion guide (for adults who want to engage teenagers in a discussion about pot and driving)
- Frequently Asked Questions (to inform the discussion)
- 10 Questions (a handout for teenagers to start the discussion)
- Responses to the 10 questions (handouts for teenagers to encourage talking and listening)

Project activities continued from January to March 31, 2006 when CPHA partnered with the Ajunnginiq (Inuit) Centre at the National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO) to examine pot and driving issues in northern, remote, Aboriginal and circumpolar regions. Pot and Driving resources were developed for distribution to Inuit communities in the North in order to raise

awareness of the risks of driving high www.potanddriving.cpha.ca/3_north.html. In addition, the campaign website was translated into Inuktitut. Increased knowledge and understanding of how to work effectively with Inuit communities to address social problems was an outcome of the project.

For the period April 1 to December 31, 2006, CPHA received funding from Health Canada to expand the campaign. During this expansion, CPHA built on the credibility and outreach of the 2005 campaign by targeting the same adolescent audience – Canadian youth aged 14 to 18 years – but this time with messages around high-risk, underage drinking.

Alcohol is the drug most frequently used by Canadian youth. According to the 2004 Canadian Addiction Survey, 91% of youth aged 15 and older have consumed alcohol. While youth drink alcohol less frequently than adults, when they do drink, they drink more. Heavy or ‘binge’ drinking is defined as having 5 or more standard drinks on one occasion.

Heavy drinking can lead to alcohol poisoning, impaired driving, physical injury, risky sexual behaviour, and lowered academic performance. Research tells us that the rates of heavy drinking among youth on a weekly and monthly basis are almost double those of adults. The rate of harm experienced by young people as a result of their own drinking is significantly higher than for adults.

Research activities included a review of formal and grey literature on issues related to youth and alcohol and an environmental scan. In addition, 23 “key informant” interviews were conducted with experts to identify: best practices for influencing adolescents about high-risk drinking; training and awareness programs for parents, teachers, counselors, and youth; and evidence-based prevention and promotion interventions.

Exploratory focus groups were conducted with the youth target audience for information on attitudes and behaviours relating to high-risk drinking. Website concepts were also presented. Feedback from the focus groups guided the development of messages and resources.

A bilingual website on underage drinking was developed, called drinkingfacts.ca www.drinkingfacts.ca. The objective of the website is to raise awareness among Canadian youth (primary target audience) and parents and educators (secondary tar-

get audience) about alcohol, including the harms associated with high-risk drinking and strategies for avoiding those harms, via an “infosite” that:

- * is fact and evidence-based;
- * includes current information;
- * is visually and functionally appealing to the target audience;
- * asks questions and encourages youth to reflect, draw conclusions and make their own decisions about alcohol.

The website launch in December 2006 coincided with the holiday season when many young people across the country would consume alcohol as part of their social activities.

Drinkingfacts.ca is based on extensive research and conversations with young Canadians. Information is presented in a variety of formats, including quizzes, Q & A, Did you know? and an ‘Alcopedia’. Youth tell their personal stories in candid videos and written format. Drinkingfacts.ca is designed to increase teens’ knowledge of alcohol-related risks so they will be better equipped to make decisions about drinking. The site will be of interest to youth, parents and educators.

The website was promoted via an electronic campaign through networks developed during the 2005 Pot and Driving campaign. The many organizations across the country that undertook extensive promotion of the 2005 campaign were contacted to assist with promoting the high-risk underage drinking initiative. High schools across the country were also notified about the website launch.



Managing the Alternate Classroom

by Gretchen Vogelsang



About the Author:

Gretchen Vogelsang has been involved in Alternate education for the last 8 years in the Nechako Lakes school district (#91) in BC. She has chosen to make Fort St. James her home with her husband, their son and the family's 18 dogs.

Instilling order in a classroom can be daunting to an instructor, especially when the concept of management is treated as abstract, not prescriptive.

Rationale

The literature shows that teachers are ill prepared for classroom management in teacher education courses, and personality styles can be translated loosely into management styles, and as efficient management has been shown to lead to increased student achievement and satisfaction, a curricular model for teachers to develop management styles that are effective, efficient, and conducive to student development will:

The literature exposes a historically cyclical pattern in research of management styles, teacher behaviour, and their affects on student achievement. The following will provide an overview of the

relevant literature. Current research can be separated into four categories:

Classroom management styles;

Personality/behaviour styles of teachers;

Teacher efficacy in management; and

Teacher preparation and education into the realms of classroom management and order **efficacy**: one's beliefs in one's ability to complete a certain task.

teacher efficacy: "a judgment of his or her capabilities" in regard to outcome attainment in the classroom: Academic or Social, (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001, p. 783).

classroom management: the creation of the climate of the classroom, expectations for learning, and behaviour.

classroom discipline: the corrective action taken after student misbehaviour.

presage variables: teacher behaviours that could be developed prior to, during,

or after, teacher education, yet have an influence on the classroom and students, (Rowan, et al., 2002, p. 1535).

Management of a classroom has a definite impact on student achievement. Borich suggested that, "[r]esearch studies have contributed insightful glimpses of how teachers often needlessly create disciplinary problems by the way they manage and conduct their classes," (Borich, 1988, p. 250). Examples of inefficient management include, "...exclusive authoritarian climate...mass punishment... [and] lack of clear instructional goal," (Borich, 1988, p. 257). Identification of problematic management is off-task behaviour and a lack of clearly stated expectations. Student behaviour often results when there is a gap in planning or in the structure of the classroom. Management is a task teacher's work on all day, every day, not

just when correcting student misbehaviour: "Even the most indirect discussions must be crafted to communicate a structure, an end result, and a clear expectation of student contact," (Borich, 1988, p. 268).

Effective management can be characterized as, "...cooperative environment...overlapping activities...ability to see all the classroom at once....balance...business-like," (Borich, 1988, p. 268), and it includes five elements:

- 1) management principles
- 2) teacher efficacy
- 3) teacher education
- 4) student achievement
- 5) classroom culture

These elements deserve equal attention in an effort to increase teacher efficacy in classroom management, (Emmer & Stough, 2001, p. 110).

Teacher behaviour is directly related to misbehaviour in the classroom, and "...misbehavior is associated with lower confidence in managing students' behaviours," (Martin, et.al., 1999, p. 6).

Examination of classroom culture makes obvious the connection between teacher behaviour and classroom makeup, often showing that, "...the teacher's value system will dominate the content of the curriculum and the organization of the students' learning experiences," (Jeanpierre, 2004, p. 2). Each has, "...individual differences in how [they] perceive, think, solve problems, learn, and relate to others," (Armstrong, 2004, p. 601). Each personality deals with conflict in a different manner as well. Reaction

can be situational, authoritative, independent, competitive, or gender-role based, (Samuel, 1998, p. 17). A teacher's personality and conflict management style effect students. "Perceived student control and perceived teacher control are likely to have an additive effect on the academic attainment of students...[and] is contingent somewhat more on the former than on the latter," (Eshel & Kohavi, 2003, p. 257). While an, "...understanding of style can lead to increased tolerance, reduced defensiveness, and less critical judgments of others," (Merrill, 1981, p.189).

It has been shown that, "...teachers most effective in dealing with misbehaviour are those teachers most confident in their ability to teach difficult students," (Giallo & Little, 2003, p. 23). Ironically though, "...studies revealed that teachers perceived themselves to be trained poorly to deal with behaviour management issues," (Giallo & Little, 24).

Unfortunately for researchers, personality styles and confidence levels are "presage variables" as defined by Rowan, Correnti and Miller, and are very difficult to define concretely as they are, "...properties of teachers that can be assumed prior to [teaching], but also have an influence on the interactive phase [of the classroom]," (Rowan, et al., 2002, p. 1535).

Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy have separated TE into three component efficacies, engaging students, establishing learning strategies and expectations, and managing behaviours, (Emmer & Hickman, 1991, p. 797). They conclude that their research into TE shows that, "...[i]f the significant effects of

teacher beliefs in their capabilities were taken seriously it could provoke significant changes in the way teachers [are] prepared and supported in their early years in the profession," (Emmer & Hickman, 1991, p. 802). So why then is efficacy not developed, and classroom management not taught to teachers?

An examination of major research into the variables that affect student achievement shows teacher effects, "...have been examined for their relationship to student learning includ[ing] measures of academic ability, years of education, years of teaching experience, measures of subject matter and teaching knowledge, certification status, and teaching behaviours in the classroom," (Darling-Hammond, 1999, p. 6). Of these sub-variables, teacher prep, teaching experience and teaching behaviours were shown to have the most, "...consistently positive influence ...on teachers' effectiveness," (Darling-Hammond, 1999, p. 8), and these variables had the greatest effect on student achievement.

Teacher efficacy's affect on student achievement has been "overlooked" by major research but, "...a clear link between teacher efficacy and student achievement," has been evident since the work of Rand, et al, in the 1970's.

"Teachers with a high sense of efficacy communicate high expectations for performance to students, put greater emphasis on instruction and learning with students, are aware of student accomplishments, are less likely to give up on low-achieving students, and are more likely to work harder on their behalf...[They are]

more open to implementing and experimenting with new teaching strategies because they do not view change as an affront to their own activities as teachers," (Chase et al., 2001, p. 143).

Teacher efficacy in classroom management can influence student's feelings of "connectedness" to school, a feeling which has been shown to affect performance as, "...analysis [has] revealed that school connectedness is lower in schools with difficult classroom management climates," (McNeely, et al., 2001, p. 145). Yet in order to have efficacy in classroom management, and to increase student achievement through that efficacy, teachers will need to change how they teach, districts how they support their teachers and preparatory institutions in how they prepare educators: "The classroom environment necessary to reform education is fundamentally different from what most teachers experienced as students, and for teachers to be successful in taking on new roles and changing practices that have withstood decades of reform efforts, they will need a new articulation of the role of the teacher and clear standards for transforming their teaching," (Doherty, et al., 2003, p. 19).



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This is the fourth in a series of articles prepared by or on behalf of the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation for the *CAP Journal*. This series is part of an ongoing partnership between CAP and the Foundation aimed at providing principals and vice-principals across the country with information about the Foundation's Millennium Research Program and, in particular, the Foundation's work around overcoming barriers to post-secondary studies that begin at the high school level.

For more information on the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, visit the Foundation's Web site at www.millenniumscholarships.ca

PARENTAL EDUCATION LEVELS —

A Useful Indicator For School Strategies

When you look out into the hallway of your high school and see familiar student faces, can you tell who will or will not pursue post-secondary studies?

According to the Pan Canadian High School Follow-up Survey (PCHSFS), which in 2005 polled 4,000 former Grade 12 students in three provinces across the country, 70% of Canadian students will go on to college or university within two years of high school graduation. That survey,

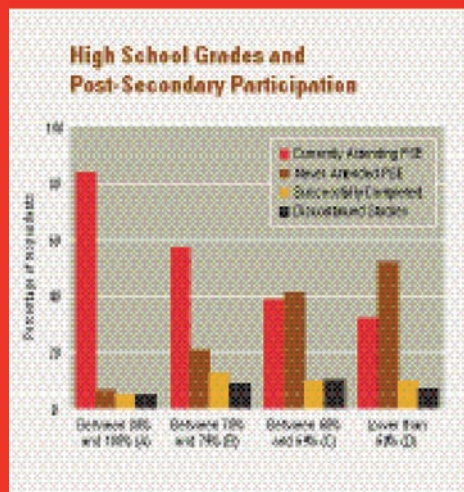
completed last spring, plus some recent numbers from the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, can help educators in the sometimes difficult task of understanding what makes that 30% not pursue their studies past secondary school.

High school grades are an important indicator for going on to PSE, according to the PCHSFS. A whopping 89% of those Grade 12 students who attained 80% or higher were, two years later, either attending or had completed a PSE program. On the other side of the ledger, only 41% of respondents that reported grades lower than 60% in high school were in or had completed a PSE program.

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), an internationally standardized assessment of problem solving, and mathematical, reading and scientific literacy, has become an important indicator, helping to point out who will go on to post-secondary education. Now in 58 countries and in its third assessment since 2000, PISA is administered to between 4,500 and 10,000 15-year-olds in each country.

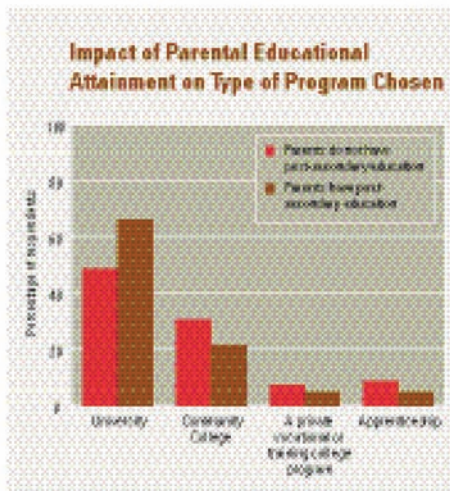
The results, as reported by Statistics Canada and summarized in the most recent version of *The Price of Knowledge*, a compendium of research compiled by the Foundation's Millennium Research Program, showed that only 28% of those who scored at the lowest reading level on the PISA test were pursuing higher education, compared to 45% at level 2, 65% at level 3, 76% at level 4 and 88% at level 5. It also found that those youths who scored at the two lowest reading levels were more likely to drop out of high school.

While it's helpful to see the connection between high school performance and PSE enrolment, many Canadian high school principals say they can often recognize the signs of future paths at an early stage. For Mike Ruttan, the assistant principal at Alberni District Secondary School in Port Alberni, British Columbia, these signs are apparent as early as elementary school, the sector in which he formerly worked, and are found in behaviour, expectations and family backgrounds.



Ruttan says a small percentage of households lack the tools to encourage their kids to strive. He says those forces at home offer quite a barrier for the youth. “It’s the rare kid that can take a path that’s different than the family attitude.”

That kind of barrier was tracked in the PCHSFS through a very simple piece of information. It found the level of education attained by parents plays an important role in whether or not students go on to PSE. According to the follow-up survey, those former Grade 12 students with parents who had attended a PSE program were significantly more likely to attend a PSE institution two years after high school than those with no family history of PSE.



The correlation is quite stunning. Eighty-seven per cent of parents that received a university degree had children that attended a post-secondary program. If children of parents with no post-secondary education did pursue post-secondary activities, more than half of them would choose college, private vocational programs or apprenticeship, an option chosen by less than a third of those with more educated parents.

Students whose parents had attended a post-secondary institution were also more likely to obtain grades of 80% or higher.

Even youths who were receiving encouragement but were getting it from parents that had not attended a post-secondary program were less likely to attend a post-secondary program compared to those whose parents had some level of post-secondary education.

Two years after Grade 12, former high school students who had children were less likely to participate in PSE. But the influence of a parent with post-secondary education seems to make such a big difference that even those high-risk students with dependants did much better if they had parents who had attended college or university.

Ruttan is not surprised by that overriding influence and sees the barrier of having parents with no post-secondary education in his school, which counts many family heads with little formal education. Port Alberni, which had provided employment to many of those parents when they left high school in the '60s and '70s, has lost many of its jobs in the traditional forestry sector. He says many of those same parents want better career options for their children and would like to see them go on, but he says many of them do not have the skills to encourage further studies.

Wanting is one thing: “You’ll never meet parents who do not want their kids to complete school beyond Grade 10. They all want their kids to do well.” The more difficult path, he says, is driving home the point that PSE is a good alternative. That comes out in different ways, including seeing the benefit up close of a parent who has formal education. “It takes hundred of hours of modelling and repeating.”

He admits it’s difficult to convince a teenager, dying to be done with high school, that more schooling is the answer. “For many 15-, 16- and 17-year-olds, all they think about is the golden apple, to be free and have no responsibilities.”

STUDENTS TEMPTED BY HOT JOB MARKET MUST CONSIDER LONG-TERM

Alberta is seeing an unusually high number of its students taking time off after high school, dropping out of post-secondary studies and deciding not to pursue university or college because of a red-hot labour market that is drawing them away.

A booming economy, the type Alberta is currently seeing, where instant well-paying jobs can lure young people away from school, can be as significant a player in halting the pursuit of post-secondary education as the more traditional barriers, according to the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation in its latest report, *The Price of Knowledge 2006*.

The report draws on a comparison done by Statistics Canada in 2003 of three provinces’ Grade 12 students. It shows that a third of Albertans took time off school to work in the two years after graduating from high school, significantly more than the one-fifth of New Brunswickers who did the same. Furthermore, many Albertans who do pursue university or college get hired while still in school, with 10 per cent of all post-secondary students in Alberta deciding to drop out of PSE to take a job. That was significantly more than in Saskatchewan or New Brunswick, where the figures were 5.9 and 2.3 per cent, respectively. Most notably, Albertans were almost twice as likely to say that what stopped them from pursuing higher education was a job.

Those kinds of labour decisions match what recent numbers from Statistics Canada have been pointing to on hot job sectors. The biggest recent growth has been in areas requiring less education, including clerical work, retail, construction and mining. And of those growing sectors, the oil and gas sector, mostly located in Alberta, has seen a huge increase in labour activity, where new jobs have grown by 43 per cent between 2000 and 2004.

But the jobs for which these young people are trading in their education may not all be around when the province bids farewell to its boom. Statistics Canada’s Lucy Chung, in a 2006 report, concludes that “earnings growth among less-educated workers is not expected to be sustainable.” She says the recent increases are simply a part of a short-term fluctuation in demand.

If that’s so, then many Albertans might in the future be wishing they would have pursued a post-secondary education instead of taking that instant job.

—Philip Fine



BC PROGRAM LOOKS AT WAYS TO OVERCOME AT-RISK PREDICTORS

A program recently introduced to Canadian classrooms has been proving that kids who start out at a disadvantage can minimize or alleviate the at-risk predictors sticking to them.

Advancement Via Individual Determination, or AVID, was developed in 1980 by San Diego school teacher Mary Catherine Swanson and is now being taught in more than 2,500 schools in 16 countries, including British Columbia, where the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation and the B.C. government have helped set up the AVID program in 20 of the province's high schools.

The system places academically average students in advanced post-secondary preparatory classes while providing them with the skills and supports to achieve success. AVID uses some very specific tools, such as binders that the students learn to keep organized, making sure various materials from different courses don't get mixed up. Proper note-taking and Socratic questioning are also taught, with students working mostly in small study groups.

For Mike Ruttan, the assistant principal at Alberni District Secondary School in Port Alberni, who has 60 students enrolled in AVID, the note-taking, time management, test-taking strategies and graduation expectations have given his students a real gift of "seeing where they're heading."

—Philip Fine

But those dreams of little responsibility turn to hard reality for many as early messages from guidance counsellors, teachers and principals come back to play in their head. Recently, Ruttan was paid a visit by a former student who had traded PSE pursuits for work in Alberta. The student told Ruttan that he regretted this decision and was now looking to complete the courses that would give him a better job in the booming province in which he now lives (see sidebar, Students Tempted By Hot Job Market Must Consider Long-Term).

Other barriers have also been noted in both The Price of Knowledge and the PCHSFS. For those former students looking back at why they never attended a post-secondary program, the greatest factors, they say, had been financial issues (31%) and indecision about a career (29%). For those deterred for financial reasons, debt aversion appears to be the biggest single issue. Financial concerns, and debt aversion in particular, are also important reasons why some students drop out of a post-secondary program before earning a degree. Among drop-outs, however, a combination of lack of interest or satisfaction with their program, or lack of direction in their career, was a more important factor than financial constraints.

It's been difficult to assess how much tuition levels have affected PSE participation, with one study showing a 1.3%

reduction in participation for every \$1,000 increase in the price of PSE. However, this study was conducted during a time of rising enrolment.

Most agree that students from low-income backgrounds have more riding against them, having had less money put aside and fewer discussions within their families about the necessary financial preparations.

It's important to remember that all these figures, from grades to parental education, are simply indicators and will not predict the fate of those who have recently graduated from high school. Alberni's Ruttan says schools can do a lot to fight against these predictors. He says he is lucky to have a team of counsellors who are good at keeping students motivated and organized, as well as specific programs like AVID (see sidebar, BC Program Looks at Ways to Overcome At-Risk Predictors) that prepare students for the rigours of PSE.

It appears that many students do overcome barriers thanks to work by committed schools that want to help give students the message that, despite what the indicators are saying, they have a bright future beyond high school.

Philip Fine is an education reporter writing on behalf of The Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

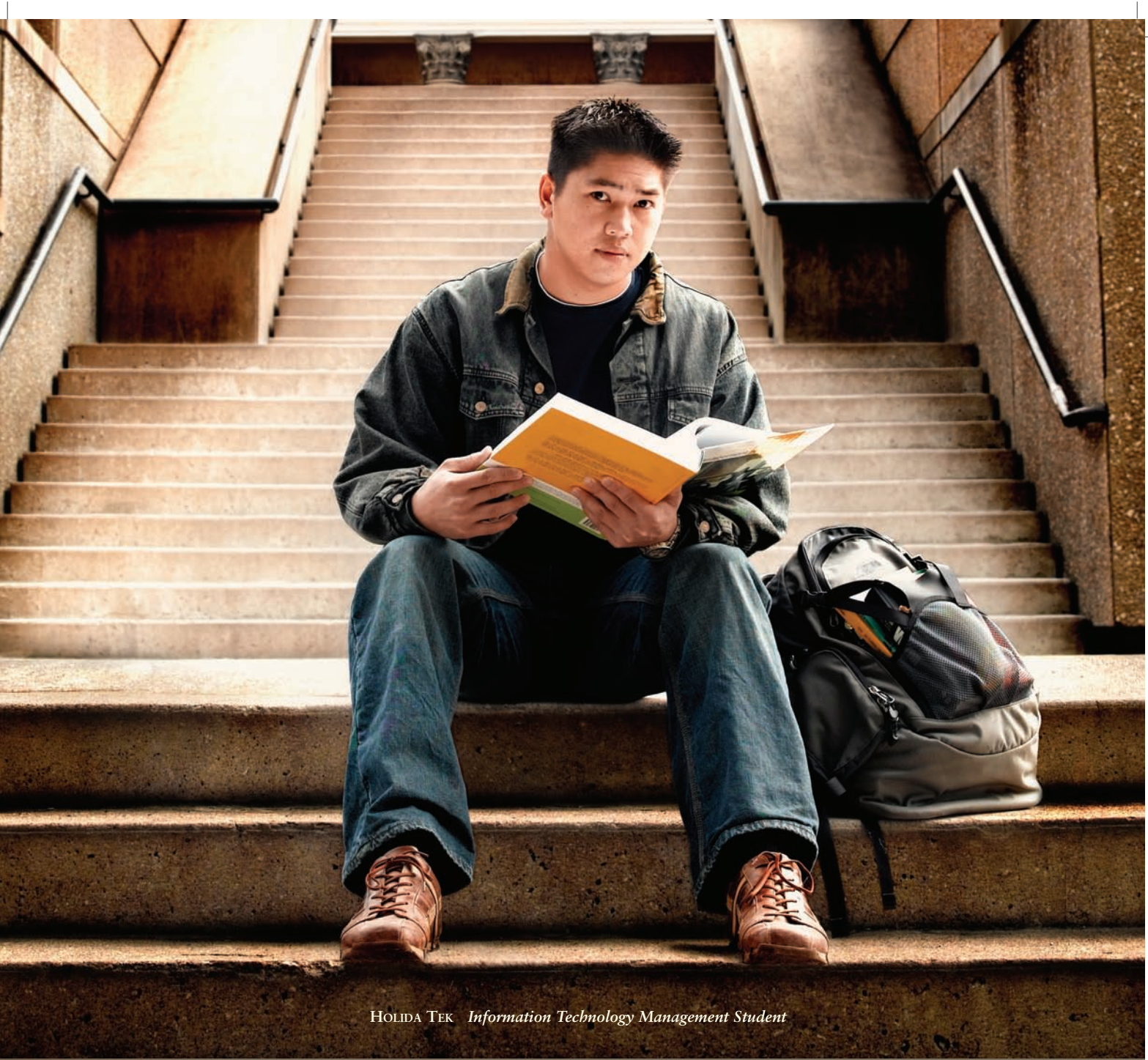
PUBLICATIONS REFERENCED IN THIS ARTICLE, RELATED RESEARCH AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE FOUNDATION'S MILLENNIUM RESEARCH PROGRAM:

The Pan Canadian High School Follow-Up Survey (PCHSFS), R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd.
Scheduled for release by the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation early in 2007.
<http://www.millenniumschorships.ca/en/research/AllPublications.asp>

The Price of Knowledge 2006 edition
<http://www.millenniumschorships.ca/en/research/AllPublications.asp>

Ready or Not? Literacy Skills and Post-Secondary Education (2003), J. Douglas Willms and Patrick Flanagan
http://www.millenniumschorships.ca/images/Publications/ready_en.pdf

AVID Program
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HOLIDA TEK *Information Technology Management Student*

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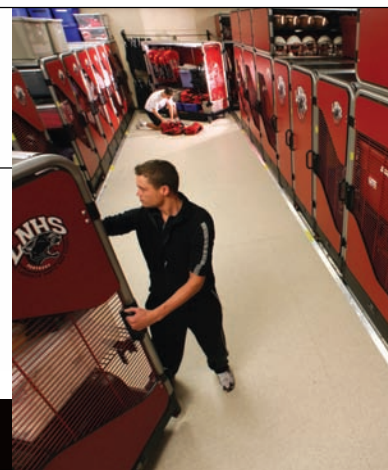
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